

Stars & Stripes Forever

Who's Red, White & Blue in the Bluegrass?

By Kim Thomas

After a winter and spring full of divisiveness and bitter arguing, “Unity”—the soothing song of Summer—finally made its debut, and started to chart its course this past week with a well-televized, public display of warmth and reconciliation. Yes, it’s true, but not only did Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee mend fences and reunite for the sake of the *family* (and ain’t *that* America?) but Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton mended fences as well, for the sake of the *country*. Heck, I’ve even been invited to join a “Hug A Republican” event on Facebook. No doubt about it, there’s nothing better than the Fourth of July for bringing Americans together in the kind of fellowship that just happens when we’re reminded that it’s *WE* the people, not *ME* the people.

With the Fourth sparkling before me, I started to wonder what *Ace* readers felt about the Fourth of July. Their answers were as varied as the floats in Friday’s Independence Day Parade will be.

SCOTT DIAMOND says “Each and every fourth of July means that I have had the privilege to celebrate the birth of the nation that has given me the ability to spend another year with the freedom to worship as I believe, the freedom to hold whatever political belief that I wish, the freedom to work in an occupation that is meaningful to me, the freedom to have married the woman whom I love, and the freedom for both of us to foster, adopt, and now raise our two children.”

“My fondest remembrance of the 4th is from a weekend drive that my wife and I took into western Kansas back in the early 90s. We ended up in Garden City, a town centered on the meat-packing industry, and a town whose population had become increasingly Hispanic in the past years. Well, fourth of July in Garden City was a MASSIVE celebration of freedom by a mix of peoples who had found freedom together and become one people, Americans. Not a perfect mix, not a perfectly pleasant history—First Nations had been displaced, African Americans had been brought as slaves, Anglo-Americans had fought a guerilla war in the 1850s, Mexicans sometimes seen as interlopers—but a shared history, and a shared present.”

“Independence Day means freedom to me. The holiday reminds me that I live in a country founded, however imperfectly, on

two new ideas: freedom and citizenship, and not on old ideas of geography or ancestry. The United States of America is not defined by the ethnicity of its inhabitants, or by the physical location of their homes, but by the shared belief enunciated on this day in 1776:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Scott Diamond is Vice President of Art-in-Motion, a grassroots movement to build artistic bus shelters throughout Lexington’s main corridors. Scott also teaches science at The Saint John School in Georgetown, is Adjunct Assistant Professor at U.K. College of Medicine.

DICK GABRIEL’s idea of a perfect 4th is, “Sleeping in and hearing my friends tell me how humid it was as they ran in the Blue Grass 10,000...Heading downtown to be part of the big crowd—Hoping the fireworks I’m setting off don’t have defective fuses!”

Gabriel recalls July 4ths of the past as being a time for family and friends, “When we were really young, my parents each summer used to take us to a backyard party with two of their closest friends. We did the usual hot dogs/hamburgers thing; there was always watermelon (bury your face in it and spit the seeds as far as you could) and my dad’s buddy would make homemade ice cream. He had the old ice cream-maker that required endlessly turning a crank, but we were so excited, we fought over who got to do it. I seem to remember it being better than any store-bought ice cream I’d ever had.”

When asked, What does Independence Day mean to you, Gabriel laughed and said, “Will Smith, bitch-slapping an alien!” Kidding aside, he reflects: “I always wonder, in today’s political climate, how the ‘Founding Fathers’ would be perceived. Some say they were just rich white guys who didn’t want to pay taxes; I prefer to think they were agents of change, political activists

who weren’t happy with the way the country was being owned/operated. Instead of sitting back, whining and saying ‘Why?’, they said, ‘Why not?’”

Dick Gabriel is a 2007 Ace Bluegrass Bachelor, and a sports anchor; his radio show on WLAP can be heard every week night from 6pm to 8pm.

JIM GRAY Vice Mayor Jim Gray says his idea of a perfect Fourth of July, “is being Downtown Lexington for the parade...then a cookout with family and friends later in the day. His favorite memory of the Fourth of July was, “actually walking in the fourth of July parade and seeing such a big crowd of folks along the sidewalks in our downtown.”

ENZINA MASTRIPPOLITO’s was on her way to visit a friend in Italy, saying, “So I am sure I will make a *new* memory for 4th of July, but my favorite memory is running away on the spur of the moment to fly to New York City for the spectacular fireworks show over the harbor.” Z says that “Independence Day itself has always meant freedom and a new life, having come from foreign shores in my childhood.”

Z has her own equine photography company, Photos By Z, is the track photographer for Keeneland and has been affiliated with the Thoroughbred Times for over 20 years. Originally from Germany, she came to Lexington by way of New York City.

KRIM BOUGHALEM is originally from France, but his ultimate way to spend the Fourth is, “with my friends at my neighbors Joe and Denise’s annual 4th of July party!” He remembers most fondly his second year in America, when he spent the 4th of July in Washington, D.C in front of the White House.

Krim is the owner/proprietor of WINE + MARKET, which he recently opened with wife Andrea Sims at the corner of Second and Jefferson, in Ace Weekly’s former stomping grounds.

NANCY COX says her concept of “the perfect 4th of July is a day spent with family and friends...a day filled with laughter, good food and fireworks. My favorite memory is actually a collection of all the Independence Day celebrations I enjoyed in my hometown of Campbellsville. Everyone flooded Main Street for the parade, a hot air balloon race, the food and fellowship. I always finished

the day feeling so much love for my community and my country. I was able to go back for the 2007 celebration which was even better than I remembered childhood.”



Nancy celebrates Independence Day as “an appreciation for our past and all those who fought and died to give birth to democracy. It’s also optimism for the future that my children and grandchildren will have that same dedication to freedom.”

Nancy Cox-Kenny is a veteran Lexington news anchor. She and her husband, Tom Kenny have two children.

RACHEL CHILDRESS, explains that her idea of a perfect Fourth of July is pretty simple: “family, no chores, good food, peace in the world. She likes to remember the time her family would go to a big field near the zoo in Louisville. “We took a blanket and peanuts and watched the free concert and firework We talked, laughed, watched other families, and enjoyed family time. It was a carefree time of life. Independence Day is an opportunity to celebrate one of the wonderful things about this—our freedom—especially the freedom we have to think, worship and serve.”

“Although our freedoms in this country are tremendous, there are still many of our sisters and brothers who find themselves bound by things like poverty, illness and sadness. As I understand it, the founders of our country did not want freedom simply for freedom’s sake but so we could work and live together in harmony. That means helping one another achieve our dreams and goals...Independence Day is a great time to reflect on ways we can learn from and serve each other.”

Rachel Smith Childress is the Executive Director of Lexington Habitat for Humanity.

MICHAEL RINTAMAA’s says “In our married years, Margaret and I have only had one Fourth of July here in Lexington, but it was great. The best part was the bike parade that our neighborhood (Harrods Hill) did. All the kids decorate their bikes and meet in the central corner of the neighborhood. Then they all ride to the neighborhood park, led by a fire engine! Once at the park, prizes were given for each age group’s best decorated bike.”



Rintamaa laughs and recalls when a good friend who is a Chaplain in the Army happened to visit once over the 4th holiday. "We were in the front yard, and he looked down the street and pointed to each house in turn—American flag, flag, flag, flag, flag, etc—until he pointed at our house which didn't have a flag at all! He says to me jokingly, 'What, are you, communist or something?'" To this day, I proudly fly the American flag in front of my house, in honor of him and all those who serve with him. It pretty much flies from Memorial Day, through Flag Day and July 4, and often almost all summer long!"

Michael Rintamaa is the Director of Music



at Central Christian Church, directs the community Alluring Handbell Ensemble, and is founder of Central Music Academy, which provides music lessons to underprivileged inner city children.

OLIVIA SPRADLIN, said "The 4th of July is not one of my favorite holidays. The parade downtown screws up my parking and I don't get presents. I had to think, really rack my brain to find outstanding memories...I grew up spending summer weekends at Lake Herrington, and our community there is middle America in the 1970s. Summer days were certain to include bike rides, games of shark and ghosts in the graveyard, barefeet and without the benefit of an air conditioner! The way there is scattered with fruit and firework stands, penny candy stores and cow pastures. In this

Americana haven, every year the patriarchs of each family competed for the honor of having procured the biggest and best fireworks. Years ago one of my older male relatives *finally* managed to prove his superior masculinity by obtaining a portion of a stick of dynamite. Much to the excitement of everyone, the dynamite was lit and hurled into the lake. Suddenly, dark gurgling bubbled up Styrofoam, sticks, and several fish! The following year, in the spirit of community, every family pooled money to produce one big show. Even today, our dock still draws attention for the fireworks and boats line up waiting to see our show.

"Over the last few years, it has been rare for me to actually be in the States during the summers. One such summer, in Cyprus, my fellow students and I were surprised with a late

night trip to Aia Marina, which is nothing more than a small shack on top of a hill overlooking the harbor in Larnaca. Upon further investigation of the dark hut, we discovered it was a small, drafty and dimly lit church. Despite the wind howling through the church, Larnaca's harbor and the stars above it were clear and bright. The only sign of activity in the distant hills was the trail of autos traveling up and down the hills; I remember thinking that they looked like Matchbox cars with firefly headlights, only faint reminders of the fireworks that must be going off at home in the States."

Olivia Spradlin is an anthropology student at the University of Kentucky, and is currently working on her thesis. She's a lifeguard and swimming teacher at the YMCA.

God Bless America...pray for peace. ■

The Cold Slap of Reality

Sometimes, you get the feeling that the world is a just place, that rational thoughts and ideas can defeat false talking points, that united effort for the common good can overcome the greed and power of the few. Other times, reality punches you in the face. For the past four months, many in Lexington had that former feeling. We witnessed a small group with no money turn into one the largest grassroots political movements that Lexington has seen in many years. But at 7:30 Wednesday night, June 25, in the LFUCG chamber, these upstarts finally got the fist to the gut.

This was the Courthouse Area Design Review Board hearing, where the Webb Brothers applied to receive permission to bulldoze the entire block encompassing Main, Upper, Vine and Limestone, in order to make way for the giant luxury hotel/condo complex known pretentiously as "CentrePointe."

In their way was the ragtag group of citizens organized under Preserve Lexington, with assistance from allies on the LFUCG Council, such as Vice-Mayor Jim Gray.

After a five-hour marathon of testimony from lawyers, preservationists and ordinary citizens, the application to demolish the block was approved. While the fight is not over yet, this was undoubtedly a key victory for Webbs' high-priced army of lawyers and consultants, who had previously been outmatched by this citizen movement at every turn.

When I arrived at the LFUCG building at 1:30, the Council chamber was already full and there was a line stretching out the front door full of opponents to the demolition. By the beginning of the hearing at 2 pm, well over 100 opponents had squeezed into the downstairs overflow room, just so they could watch the proceedings on TV. Not bad for a Wednesday afternoon.

Such scenes have been commonplace in this grassroots movement to confront the Webbs' CentrePointe project. Just as the last delayed hearing of this board witnessed the same incredible turnout, every event organized by Preserve Lexington has

exceeded all expectations in terms of numbers and enthusiasm.

Up in the chamber, the first four rows on the left side of the room sat a team of old, white, bald men in dark suits. These were made up of the Webbs' team of lawyers and Atlanta based consultants.

The battle line of sharks vs. citizens was drawn. The proceeding started off with the sketchiest tactic of the entire five hour hearing. The Webbs' lawyer, Darby Turner, stated that they would build the CentrePointe project whether they get the TIF funding or not (\$70 million in public funds). If the city decides to give it to them, great, if not, they'll still build it. This is, of course, a cynical tactic. Knowing that the TIF funding was their biggest obstacle and it would likely play a factor in the board's decision to allow these buildings to be torn down, the Webbs chose to white-wash this issue before the board. (Once the buildings are down, I'll go ahead and guarantee you that the Webbs will be asking for the TIF. Count on it.)

If you believe this ruse, you probably also believe that Barack Obama is a Muslim sleeper agent and that Dick Cheney steered radio controlled model planes into the Trade Center. The Webbs then brought out their high-priced Atlanta consulting firm to show photos of pigeon droppings in the attic of landlord Joe Rosenberg's buildings on the block, claiming that they are beyond repair. They conducted every single test imaginable, yet not an asbestos search, which is quite convenient considering that demolishing these buildings could swarm downtown with it. Then they brought out another Atlanta consultant to show how wonderful their CentrePointe project would be. He appeared as if he was born and raised on a used car lot as he sold the magical wonders of the new luxury hotel. He first bragged on the firm that designed CentrePointe, saying that another one of their hotels was used as a backdrop for the *Today Show* in Miami. That's right Lexington, we're going to get in on some sweet Al Roker action.

Then he piled on the sugar, saying that in the luxury complex's shops, he could see "college students and suburbanites

sipping coffee." He also said that these college folks, hipsters and artists could take heart in the fact that some of the bricks from Buster's would be used on CentrePointe. I'll just go ahead and assume that argument didn't sway any Buster's fans.

Then it was the opponents' turn. Vice-Mayor Jim Gray went first. He began by putting the entire citizen opposition to this project into context, saying that dissent is necessary for progress. Without criticism and input from the public, we settle for the inadequate. Gray went on to mention how every great city in America is now managing to restore its old buildings and incorporate it into their new infill development. He feared that Lexington might not choose to be among them. "Maybe Mark Twain was right when he said 'I want to be in Kentucky when the end of the world comes, because it's always 20 years behind'." Gray also doubted Turner's claim that the Webb's would not ask for TIF funding. Get ready for that public reversal in no time.

Dick DeCamp, departing 3rd District Councilman, then spoke. He noted that we are in bad financial times, implying that the Webbs could get halfway through their construction and decide that it wasn't economically feasible to continue, leaving us a big pile of nothing there. Councilman Tom Blues

Guest Opinion

by Joe Sonka

spoke, noting that 132 years ago to the day was Custer's last stand. Gen. Custer ignored all warnings and advice and charged right ahead into Little Big Horn. If we do the same thing with CentrePointe, rushing this through, Lexington might live to regret it. After a few speakers on the Preserve Lexington side (and much smirking from Dudley Webb), attorney and recent Buster's owner Jessica Case gave one of the more memorable testimonies of the hearing. She aired the ugly truth about the block, stating that the owners had intentionally let the buildings fall into disrepair in order to drive down their value, ensuring that they would be scrapped for CentrePointe to take its place. Dudley Webb and Joe Rosenberg did not look pleased.

(Case reports that Rosenberg approached her after the recess and threatened to sue her.)

Preserve Lexington's lawyer, Hank Grady, then closed, stating the fact the other Marriotts around the country are presently incorporating old buildings into their new hotels, or building right next to them. The Webbs' argument that this can't be done is just false when looking at these concrete examples.

After a 10 minute recess, the public was given an opportunity to speak. After the first handful of speakers against the demolition, the hired suits from the first four rows started coming up to the podium. A young man stepped to the mic and said that the people opposing this project represented "a small group of special interests." He also said that he "was kind of a history buff," and he didn't think that the buildings were historic. You know, as a history buff.

Then came the circus. Larry Chiles, of the advertising firm Jordan-Chiles, stepped to the mic and said that the entire block was nothing but an eyesore. Chiles noted the trip that city officials recently took to



before his judgment. Odd, considering that there was no discussion of how the TIF worked during the hearing. Had the

[The Consultant] also said that these college folks, hipsters and artists could take heart in the fact that some of the bricks from Buster's would be used on CentrePointe. I'll just go ahead and assume that argument didn't sway any Buster's fans.

Austin, Texas, saying that their thriving nightclub and music scene was poppycock that Lexington didn't need. What we need is more hotels. Then, he brought out the money quote:

"Lexington is the horse capital of the world, not the weird capital of the world."

Yes, having a thriving music scene within a city that attracts artists and young professionals is just... Weird. And who wants to be weird, right? [Austin's famous for their "Keep Austin weird" t-shirts.] Then he followed up with another mind-numbing statement, noting a certain presidential candidate's message of "Change," and how CentrePointe represented the same thing. That's right, Obama for CentrePointe.

I believe the word is "chutzpa."

An African American in dreads took the mic and recited a poem he wrote about the block. After concluding, he said that if this block is taken away, artists will have nowhere to go and

Webbs been "educating" him on their facts well before this hearing in private?

From the beginning, this has been a fight of ordinary citizens with no money pouring all of their free time and energy into saving their city from a perceived boondoggle disaster... vs. millionaires with a team of high-priced lawyers and consultants. In that kind of fight, we all know who wins 99 percent of the time.

CentrePointe, with its escalators, fancy chandeliers, anti-septic piano bar, top floor suite for the Horse Sheik, and 40 empty luxury condos is one step closer to gracing Lexington for years to come, until its vacant bowels resemble the horror that is Festival Market.

But at least we won't be *weird*. ■

Lexington is likely to lose people like himself. The Webbs appeared unable to suppress smiling at the thought. A smarmy UK law student in a suit came to the mic, claiming that he's a "frequent patron" of the establishments that were there, claiming that no one goes to the Dame for ambiance. It's simply a place where there is music playing. He went on to say that UK students need to find jobs in Lexington after graduation in order to stay, and that CentrePointe would help employ them. Unless there's a new academic program at UK in housekeeping, I really find that statement hard to believe.

After five hours of testimony, the board finally made their final statements and ruling. After each member saying how tough the decision was, a unanimous 5-0 vote approved the demolition application.

Board member Anthony Wright went out of his way to thank the Webb side for "educating him on the TIF issue"

Postscript

Preserve Lexington has appealed the Courthouse Area Design Review Board's decision to the Planning Commission, which must hear it within 90 days. Preserve Lexington filed suit on Tuesday July 1 seeking a temporary injunction to prevent demolition pending that appeal. The hearing was Wednesday, July 2.

On Thursday July 3, the Council will have a first reading of a resolution "encouraging" the Webbs to apply for TIF funding. This would be the same TIF funding Turner said they would proceed "with or without" at the June 25 Courthouse Area Design Review hearing. At Tuesday's council session, Councilman Blevins expressed his opinion of the proposed project as a prospective "vertical Lexington Mall." ■

Read daily updates at barefootandprogressive.com, and on Ace's facebook page.

Launch a Campaign

by Bill Johnston

Regarding 8th district councilman George Myers' shortsighted motion that will be given a first reading at the Thursday July 3 council meeting: this motion is to "encourage" the Webbs to make a TIF application. On Tuesday July 1 this motion passed 8 to 5 to be placed on the docket for Thursday, July 3. This, in effect, becomes an early vote supporting a TIF.

It is vital that this motion be defeated. That will show the city that they need to pay attention to all of the citizens and work together to develop a design that works for everyone.

The five council members who voted against this "invitation to encourage" on Tuesday were: Gray, Blues, DeCamp, James, and Blevins. Call and thank them, and ask them to continue to NOT support the TIF for this project, as it is proposed.

Call your district council member today and at-large council members—and identify where you live, so they know that you will be voting for them. Email each person you talk to in order to re-enforce your phone call.

The following is a list of Council members, names, districts, phone numbers, and email addresses. (The council members not listed are perceived to not be moveable on this issue.)

Peggy Henson 258.3218 phenson@lfucg.com
 Chuck Ellinger II 258.3212 cellinger@lfucg.com
 David Stevens 258.3200 davids@lfucg.com
 Linda Gorton 258.3200 lgorton@lfucg.com

The message for those listed above: "We are disappointed that you voted for the Myers' resolution to encourage the Webbs' TIF application. We hope that you vote to defeat this on Thursday, July 3."

The message for those listed below: "Thanks for your support. We hope the Myers' resolution to encourage the Webbs' TIF application is defeated."

Andrea James 258.3216 ajames@lfucg.com
 Don Blevins 258.3200 dblevins@lfucg.com
 Jim Gray 258.3202 jgray@lfucg.com
 Tom Blues 258.3200 tblues@lfucg.com
 Dick DeCamp 258.3222 dickd@lfucg.com